

MEMORANDUM

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DATE: October 30, 1962

TO: The Vice President

FROM: Colonel Burris

RE: Cuban Refugees

Depression and gloom characterize the reactions of the Cuban refugees in Florida. There is considerable apprehension that the Soviet Union will extract a guarantee or commitment in some form that the refugees will not be permitted to invade Cuba or that no support will be given their activities. It is essential that U. S. agreements and commitments with the USSR avoid this specific question. While it does not follow that the U. S. should presently contemplate support of future action by this group, it should not, at the same time, permit even the assumption that the return of these individuals to their homeland is inhibited by an agreement or understanding of two other nations. While the impact upon the refugees themselves would be incalculable, it would, at the same time, be very great indeed among all Latin American nations. The best solution to the problem appears to be to ignore the Soviet demand and to resist similar overtures which might come from some segments of the U. N. In the meantime, efforts should be intensified toward persuading the refugees to be calm and patient during this critical period.

An ultimate solution of the refugee problem within the framework of the Organization of American States appears the most feasible. Such a course takes advantage of this recent awakening of Latin America and of this new stimulation toward mutual support, concern and cohesion for problems and peoples of the hemisphere. It diffuses the refugee problem (but does not necessarily diminish or discount it) by sharing the concern and effort for a solution with the various nations. It reduces the image that Cuba and the refugee problem are the creation and sole concern of the United States. It offers a vehicle for Latin American nations to manifest their concern, efforts and interest in resolving the problem, and by doing so, contributes to closer relations in the area. It is suggested that State create a study group to work confidentially with the OAS on the problem of refugees. Various forms of assistance could be devised, and a possible resettlement could be worked out for eventual return or repatriation if contemplated. Elements of the OAS should appropriately plan the operation and support. Planning

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for the disposition of the refugees would give hope to these individuals, provided specific action is envisioned in the relatively near future. It would also emasculate Soviet charges that the U. S. will sustain this nucleus of people as the basis for an invasion of Cuba.